

Safeguarding, Intervention, and Trade Compliance Program

Safeguarding History

In today's global marketplace, the borders between countries are beginning to disappear. International travel and trade take place in larger numbers and with fewer restrictions than ever before, bringing an average of 435,000 people into the United States each day. However, this huge volume of people and products often brings with it real threats to American agricultural and natural resources. These threats include foreign pests and diseases that could devastate these resources.

Americans have grown accustomed to seeing healthy varieties of food at supermarkets, diverse selections of plants at their local nurseries, and marvelous animals, trees, and ornamental plants at local zoos and parks. However, people do not always realize the protective measures the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and other agencies take to preserve these environmental and agricultural resources.

APHIS wants to ensure the availability of domestic and imported foods in the marketplace, facilitate the exportation of agricultural commodities to foreign countries, and preserve the health and diversity of our agricultural resources. In response to the growing volume of smuggled and improperly imported agricultural products entering the United States, APHIS created Plant Protection and Quarantine's (PPQ) Safeguarding, Intervention, and Trade Compliance (SITC) program. The SITC program's mission is to identify the unlawful entry and distribution of prohibited agricultural products. These products may harbor harmful exotic plant and animal pests, diseases, or invasive species that could seriously damage America's crops, livestock, and environment.

SITC History

In the mid 1990s, Asian fruit growers from the Homestead, FL, area complained to PPQ's Deputy Administrator that their specialty crops, specifically lichee and longans, were being undercut in the New York markets by a flood of prohibited lichees and longans from Thailand.

PPQ and APHIS Investigative Enforcement Services (IES) formed a team that determined the prohibited Thailand products were being smuggled through the Canadian border in enormous quantities. These prohibited products were being offered for sale in the New York City market areas and were definitely competing with the domestic and legal production.

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands SITC Work Unit Data for FY 2002

23,690 pounds of plant products seized
10 pounds of animal products seized
Interception of the quarantine—significant Mediterranean fruit fly (*Ceratitis capitata*)
Interception of the quarantine—significant plant rust: *Puccinia*

Area of Coverage and information contact for Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands SITC

Area of Coverage:
Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix

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The PPQ team members intercepted the prohibited material crossing the Canadian border and IES team members prosecuted the violators who were moving the prohibited material. In the first 2 years of the program, over 68 tons of prohibited Asian fruit were seized and destroyed.

The success of this operation led to the expansion of the program and development of specific position descriptions for PPQ liaison officers. A PPQ liaison officer is a PPQ officer who, in addition to their regular PPQ officer duties, works with IES investigators to identify and close the pathways of the unlawful entry and domestic distribution of prohibited foreign agricultural products into the United States. These positions were established nationwide in small numbers and organized into a network of officers whose main function was to detect and close smuggling pathways.

Two additional satellite programs were established. One of the programs was in the Los Angeles area and was known as “Cleaning-up Los Angeles Market Place” (CLAMP). CLAMP was made up of State and Federal personnel whose mission was to detect smuggled fruit fly host material and close the pathway. The other team was a group formed in Florida called Florida Interdiction and Smuggling Team (FIST). They had a similar mission of detecting smuggled products and closing the pathways for potential exotic pest introduction into Florida. As the organization became more successful and was recognized as an additional regulatory force within PPQ, it was reorganized into the current Safeguarding, Intervention, and Trade Compliance program.

SITC Partners

The SITC program accomplishes its mission in many different ways. SITC officers routinely work with U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (USDHS) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers conducting agricultural anti-smuggling and cooperative interdiction efforts at air, land, and sea ports of entry. They carry out domestic market surveys to determine the presence of prohibited products. SITC officers conduct transit survey and agricultural anti-smuggling interdiction efforts at truck weigh stations and border patrol check points inside the country. They provide education and outreach to importers, market owners, transportation companies, retailers, and the public regarding appropriate agricultural regulatory compliance. SITC officers work with State departments of agriculture and other Federal agencies such as CBP, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

SITC officers often work closely with IES investigators and USDA’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to investigate potential regulatory violations. When SITC officers have evidence that a regulation has been violated, they turn the case over to IES and OIG for prosecution. IES’ mission is to help the animal and agricultural industries achieve

compliance with APHIS regulations. Compliance is accomplished through comprehensive investigations, sound enforcement, and strong educational efforts. The mission of OIG is to investigate allegations of crime against the Department’s programs, and to promote the economy and efficiency of its operations, with the object of helping to protect its programs and to ensure integrity.

SITC At Work

In fiscal year (FY) 2002, the SITC program was responsible for seizing and destroying 2,713,840 kilos of prohibited agricultural material. Its effectiveness in shutting down smuggling pathways has supported its main mission of protecting American agriculture and protecting our agriculture export industry.

What You Can Do

If you become aware of potential smuggling of prohibited exotic fruits, vegetables, or meat products, you can help by contacting the confidential Hotline number at 1–800–877–3835 and leaving a detailed message and contact telephone number. USDA protects the confidentiality of all information sources.

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